

Child and Family Services Update

September 6, 2002

What Is The NCYL Motion About?

By Richard Anderson

If you have already read or heard the news coverage about the recent motion filed by the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) regarding our ongoing court order, you may be asking, "Why would anyone say we have done 'nothing'?" A surprised response might be appropriate. We have made good progress, and while there remains much work to do, the current achievements are very commendable.

It was just a week ago last Thursday that we were notified that the motion was filed. I received a copy late that afternoon and read the motion that night. We met with our new legal counsel from the Office of the Attorney General the very next day. You may like to know that the meeting was an extremely good one. You have a great team responding to this recent filing.

Now, why the motion? It was motivated in part by the decreased funding for the Court Monitor's contract. As you know, this happened during the last special session of the legislature. During the budget reductions our priorities focused on keeping critical services to children and families and maintaining as many staff as possible. Prior to the legislative reduction in the monitoring contract, I had discussed with the Court Monitor possible cutbacks in costs for monitoring. We have now reinstated the contract amount for monitoring pending any further order of the court.

The reduction in the contract for the Court Monitor is not all that is in the motion that was filed. The other reasons involve the 2001 report from the Monitor showing the failure to meet all the Milestone Plan's requirements.

What is NCYL asking for in the motion? These main remedies are sought:

- Restoration of all resources necessary for the Court Monitor.
- The Court Monitor to develop a remedy within 30 days for compliance with the Milestone Plan.

In addition, it is requested that the remedy include:

- Any authority the Court Monitor deems necessary.
- Consequences for future non-compliance, such as fines.
- All necessary resources to implement the remedy.

What is the real status of child welfare in Utah? Well, I can tell you that from the data that is compiled from the court monitoring, from the reports of our staff that have reviewed other states, from the criterion used for the federal reviews of states, and from our own knowledge and experience over the past three years, we are making great progress. We have requirements that were set at a time when there was no national standard for practice. Time frames were set with no real knowledge about

how long it takes to make such large-scale changes. Yet, within the past three years we have met most of the milestones in the Milestone Plan. We have instituted a standard of practice that continues to be enhanced. This last year we made large improvements in the Case Process Review (this information will be coming to you shortly). The Qualitative Case Reviews show that children are safe and families are obtaining stability.

We are improving and we have the measurements that show the improvements. Yes, we admit that we are struggling to do all we have to do within the time frames and resources we have. Don't let the court debates become a barrier to our progress. Putting this all into the larger context, we are doing good work and making commendable progress. Unfolding before us is a great future of continuing excellent child welfare practice and ongoing strengthening of broader community partnerships for child protection and family support. We need to continue to strive to achieve the goals of the Milestone Plan.

Mentoring Conferences

By Jerna Mitchell

On Friday, August 23rd, the last regional mentoring conference was held. Each region's conference was unique and an expression of the region's strengths.

Richard presented at many of the conferences and shared his insight on mentoring. He read Cowboy poetry, posed riddles, and shared stories about mentoring. He also shared an ad Ernest Shackleton placed for North Pole explorers that reminded him of Child Welfare Work. "Men Wanted for Hazardous Journey! Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success." As he spoke about mentoring we learned that using all of the Practice Model tools and skills can help us succeed on our hazardous journey as social workers in child welfare.

Southwest held a "Starworker II: Return of the Mentor" conference. They talked about, believe it or not, mentoring, the Mentoring Guide, and how mentoring would look in Southwest Region. Their lunch break carried through the theme by showing mentoring by Obi-wan and Yoda in addition to a Star Wars themed Potluck, which featured such delicacies as Chewbacca's Droppings and Yoda's Yuck.

Western Region was next with Karate "Kid." As Mr. Miagi mentored Daniel we heard such choice phrases as "someone always knows more," "Learn balance, balance is key," "First learn stand, then learn fly," and "License never replace eye, ear, brain." Western Region's caseworkers have a definite artistic flair. They created poems, sang songs, and danced all in the name of mentoring.

In Salt Lake Valley, Jackie Webb facilitated an activity that had participants list something that they would like to be mentored in, such as gardening, remodeling, etc. Participants also listed something in which they wanted mentoring. It provided an

opportunity for participants to highlight their strengths and make requests for mentoring in areas where they felt a need.

At the Eastern Region Round-up we learned that mentoring the functional assessment was done by assessing animals at the zoo. Engaging was mentored by having a trust walk, and Practice Model Principles were mentored by holding an Amazing Race. In the evening they mentored each other in walking, eating, tying a tie, answering questions and saddling or bridling a horse. All this followed by a Dutch-oven dinner that made any restaurant seem completely inadequate.

Northern Region completed the mentoring conferences with a look at the Mentoring Big Picture. They developed a list of what makes a good mentor with such items as listens, is available, models, provides feedback, is a cheerleader, patient, leader, caring, reliable, empathetic, has an open door policy, consistent, creative, thinks outside the box, etc. They made a list of the individuals in their regions that are effective mentors and the individual's areas of expertise.

It has been interesting, fun, and informative, but mostly it has been a pleasure to be a participant as each region has kicked off their formal mentoring programs. I look forward to seeing the continuation of the great mentoring that has been and is occurring throughout the state of Utah. Congratulations on all the great work that you do.

To start your own mentoring experience check out the website at:
http://www.dhs.innerweb.utah.gov/dcfs_innerweb/mentoring.htm

Check the introduction materials and guide for using skills sets, pick a topic, printout the skill set and assessment worksheet, and let the fun begin!

Upcoming Child Welfare Institute Agenda

By Marlene Goodrich

Attached you will find the agenda and registration information for the 8th Annual Child Welfare Institute to be held in Ogden on September 30 and October 1 and 2. You will also find an agenda for the collaboration day with the Division of Substance Abuse on October 2.

See you there!

When To Use "Status Offense" As A Primary Placement Reason For Foster Care

By Navina Forsythe and LaNaye Hartley

Utah Code Annotated §78-57-102 and §62A-4a-101 define "Status Offense" as, "a violation of the law that would not be a violation but for the age of the offender." Thus, status offenses are things like **truancy, smoking, or curfew** that are only illegal

because the offender is under a particular age. If a child is in custody mainly for a reason of truancy or another status offense, please make sure that you choose “status offense” as the primary reason during case creation. If the child was court ordered directly into our custody for a status offense, the protective custody date should be blank, the temporary custody date should be blank, and the adjudicated custody date should be the date of the court order. If it is a voluntary custody case for a status offense, the protective, temporary, and adjudicated custody dates should be blank. This was a recent area of inquiry by the legislative auditors office and we found some truancy cases were miscoded so we appreciate any efforts to make sure that the data in the system is correct.

Substance Abuse And Addiction Are The Primary Causes...

By Midge Delavan

"Substance abuse and addiction are the primary causes of the dramatic rise in child abuse and neglect and an immeasurable increase in the complexity of cases since the mid 1980's." This quote from No Safe Haven: Children of Substance-Abusing Parents summarizes the impact that parental substance abuse has had on children and on the child welfare system. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) conducted a survey of 915 child welfare professionals, a review of 800 professional articles, case studies of innovations, and interviews with judges and child welfare practitioners. The results of these studies include these statistics:

- From 1986 to 1997 the number of abused and neglected children jumped from 1.4 to 3 million.
- This increase is eight times the increase in population.
- The number of reported abused and neglected children who were killed has increased from 798 in 1985 to 1,185 in 1996. Some figures set that rate at 2,000 or five per day.
- Children of parents who abuse substances are 2.7 times more likely to be physically or sexually assaulted.
- Children of parents who abuse substances are 4.2 times more likely to be neglected.
- Parental neglect often leads to sexual or physical abuse by others.
- 77.8% of abuse perpetrators are birth parents.
- 10.1% are other relatives.
- 12.1% are unrelated adults.

While parents respond to treatment interventions, there are barriers: treatment availability, motivation of parents to seek treatment, availability of child care, availability of insurance coverage, among others.

What can you do?

- An important feature in child welfare is the accurate reporting of substance abuse among families. Make sure that this is part of your Functional Assessment and documentation.
- Look for the needs that underlie a family member's use of alcohol and other addictive substances.
- Partner with treatment providers on Child and Family Teams.
- Partnering with treatment providers and prevention specialists can help child welfare professionals understand and assist families. Join Child and Family Services and the Division of Substance Abuse on Wednesday, October 2, 2002 for a day of shared information, concerns, and networking as we all seek solutions that help children and families.
- Don't miss Nancy Young, keynote speaker on October 2, as she describes where we are and where we can go as partners with families.
- Keep up the good work you are doing to help children be safe, help families meet their challenges, and help communities support children and families.

Which Is Which? Victim Or Abuser?

By Barbara E. Mason (2002)

The following are some indicators that may be used to help identify the victim from the abuser. Keeping in mind that the more intelligent the abuser, the more difficult it may be to identify some of these patterns of behavior.

A. Blaming.

1. Abusers generally do not accept responsibility for their actions. They will blame the victim for their actions and behaviors. If they do state that they did something it is usually followed with how the victim made them perform the action. For example, yes I hit my partner but only because my partner made me. Always listen for the but.
2. Victims generally accept responsibility for their own actions as well as that of their partner. For example, the victim may say yes my partner hit me but only because I yelled at him/her. If I hadn't done this or that my partner would not have had to respond by violence. Victims may also minimize or deny the level of violence in order to protect the perpetrator.

B. Control.

1. Listen and watch for which partner has the most control in the relationship. Who decides the finances, friendships, job, car, family, etc. Abusers generally will dictate, through a variety of methods, what their partner can do and who they can associate with.
2. Victims are generally more dependent on their partners, although abusers can also be very dependent psychologically on their victims. Victims may need to ask for money, use of the car, who they can interact with, etc. Victims work harder at trying to keep their partner happy and relationship together.

C. Consistency.

1. Both abusers and victims may give inconsistent stories, but victims will generally lie to protect their partner and the abuser will lie to protect themselves.
2. Compare the victim's and the abuser's stories and check for consistency with outside information and reasonableness.

D. Opposition. Watch the reactions when you oppose or disagree with an individual.

1. Perpetrators many times will react by becoming more verbally aggressive, increase their volume, or may try to intimidate. They also may work harder at justifying their actions.
2. Victims may become more agreeable or just quit interacting.
3. Both may become defensive - the perpetrator to protect themselves and the victim to protect the relationship or their partner.

Do You Have A Missing Father Among Your Families?

By Midge Delavan

The Family Preservation Network has a curriculum available on fatherhood that explores the role of child welfare in an expanded national attention to the role of fathers in supporting their families. Child Welfare research has historically focused on more negative views of fathers as perpetrators, missing or embattled. The Fatherhood curriculum seeks to create a model for engaging and involving fathers.

Over one-third of American children live apart from their biological fathers. These children are at higher levels of risk for poverty, criminal activity, early pregnancy, substance abuse, and suicide. In time, father absence is also a result of some of the same factors: unwed pregnancies, divorce, incarceration, death, abandonment, domestic violence, and substance abuse.

The Fatherhood curriculum focuses on three positive roles that fathers play in the development of children: nurturer, involved parent, and economic provider. During infancy, a father:

- Becomes as attached to the infant as the mother.
- Has competent interaction with their infant.
- Interacts differently than the mother.

Part of the quality of the child-parent relationship depends on the marital relationship that affects each parent's relationship to the child and the child's general well-being. As the child matures, the mother maintains (statistically) a higher level of engagement and accessibility with the child. Father involvement for older children and adolescents helps boys' control of aggressive behavior and girls' emotional well-being, when the father is supportive.

These research findings are not necessarily couched in strengths-based language that shows the everyday importance of the father-child relationship. The findings just give an indication of the overall societal importance of that relationship. For those working with families, the challenge is to translate the value of the father-child relationship from statistics to desired results for individual children and families.

The third identified role of the father, as economic provider, also impacts the development of family relationships and children's later ability to respond to their own adult roles. Legitimate employment is a key factor.

Suggestions for child welfare work with fathers include:

- Attending to future fatherhood for boys in care.
- Including fathers around childbirth for at-risk pregnant mothers.
- Including unmarried, divorced, abusive, and incarcerated fathers in planning and services.
- Supporting employment needs of fathers who can then respond more ably to their roles as nurturer and involved parent.

Issues of domestic violence, abuse, incarceration, and locatability are barriers to father involvement in child welfare. The long-term view in Utah can include finding family, therapeutic, and systemic solutions that increase fathers' positive involvement. Using the Fatherhood curriculum would be one of those solutions.

In the nearer future, father involvement will be the subject of a workshop by Ross Ford at the Child Welfare Institute on September 30. Mr. Ford is currently working for a special project in Baltimore. His workshop is being sponsored by the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice, a Washington, D.C. based center that provides training and consultation to state child welfare agencies.

Doing The Job Right/Doing The Right Job!

By Richard Anderson

In keeping with what we learned in Practice Model training, and wanting to provide whatever perspectives might reach each and every one of you in our journey to continuous improvement, I have given the following cowboy poetry in some of the mentoring conferences. Since some had asked for copies of it, I decided to send it to all of you. My intent in sharing it is to show a mentoring situation, provide the concept of doing a good job "that stands the test of time," and an example of quality work. In some of the conferences we discussed the concepts posed in the poem and how they apply to building effective child welfare services, keeping children safe, and strengthening families in their abilities to meet the needs of children. Here it is-- compliments of Red Steagall, recognized by the Texas Legislature as Texas' Poet Laureate.

The Fence That Me And Shorty Built
RED STEAGALL/1993

We'd picked up all the fencing tools
And staples off the road.
An extra roll of 'bob' wire
Was the last thing left to load.

I drew a sleeve across my face
To wipe away the dirt.
The young man who was helping me
Was tuckin' in his shirt.

I turned around to him and said,
"This fence is finally done,
With five new strands of 'bob' wire
Shinin' proudly in the sun.

The wire is runnin' straight and tight
With every post in line.
The kinda job you're proud of,
One that stands the test of time."

The kid was not impressed at all,
He stared off into space.
Reminded me of years ago,
Another time and place.

I called myself a cowboy,
I was full of buck and bawl
I didn't think my hands would fit
Post augers and a maul.

They sent me out with Shorty
And the ranch fence building crew.
Well, I was quite insulted
And before the day was through,

I let him know that I'm a cowboy,
This ain't what I do.
I ain't no dadgummed nester,
I hired out to buckaroo.

He said, "We'll talk about that son,
When we get in tonight.
Right now you pick them augers up.
I t's either that or fight."

Boy, I was diggin' post holes
Faster than a Georgia mole.
But if a rock got in my way
I simply moved the hole.

So when the cowboys set the posts,
The line went in and out.
Old Shorty's face got fiery red
And I can hear him shout.

"Nobody but a fool would build
A fence that isn't straight.
I got no use for someone who ain't
Pullin' his own weight."

I thought for sure he'd hit me
Glad he didn't have a gun.
I looked around to find a place
Where I could duck and run.

But Shorty walked up to me
Just as calm as he could be.
Said, "Son, I need to talk to you,
Let's find ourselves a tree."

He rolled a Bull Durham cigarette
As we sat on the ground.
He took himself a puff or two
Then slowly looked around.

"Son, I ain't much on schoolin' ,
Didn't get too far with that.
But there's alot of learnin'
Hidden underneath this hat.

I got it all the hard way,
Every bump and bruise and fall.
Now some of it was easy,
But then most weren't fun a'tall

But one thing that I always got
From every job I've done,
Is do the best I can each day
And try to make it fun.

I know that bustin' through them rocks
Ain't what you like to do.
By gettin' mad you've made it tough
On me and all the crew.

Now you hired on to cowboy
And you think you've got the stuff.
You told him you're a good hand
And the boss has called your bluff.

So how's that gonna make you look
When he comes ridin' through,
And he asks me who dug the holes
And I say it was you.

Now we could let it go like this
And take the easy route.
But doin' things the easy way
Ain't what it's all about.

The boss expects a job well done,
From every man he's hired.
He'll let you slide by once or twice,
Then one day you'll get fired.

If you're not proud of what you do,
You won't amount to much.
You'll bounce around from job to job
Just slightly out of touch.

Come mornin' let's re-dig those holes
And get that fence in line.
And you and I will save two jobs,
Those bein' yours and mine.

And someday you'll come ridin' through
And look across this land,
And see a fence that's laid out straight
And know you had a hand,

In something that's withstood the years.
Then proud and free from guilt,
You'll smile and say, 'Boys that's the fence
That me and Shorty built."